United Nations S/PV.7422

Security Council

Seventieth year

Provisional

7422nd meeting
Monday, 30 March 2015, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Delattre	(France)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gaspar Martins
	Chad	Mr. Cherif
	Chile	Mr. Olguín Cigarroa
	China	Mr. Zhao Yong
	Jordan	Mr. Omaish
	Lithuania	Mr. Baublys
	Malaysia	Mrs. Adnin
	New Zealand	Ms. Hill
	Nigeria	Mr. Sarki
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Spain	Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Ramírez Carreño

Agenda

Implementation of the note by the President of the Security Council (S/2010/507)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Implementation of the note by the President of the Security Council (S/2010/507)

The President (*spoke in French*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of France.

As we near the end of the French presidency of the Security Council, it is useful to pause for a moment to take a step back and assess what we have achieved. As members know, this month has been particularly busy and intense. In March, we held 28 meetings, adopted 9 resolutions and issued 3 presidential statements and 8 press statements. To better understand these statistics, we can simply say that they are comparable, given the Council's absence from New York for one week, to the month of March of last year, which, as members will recall, established a new record in terms of workload. Today, no one can deny that the Council, as the saying goes, is actively seized of the matters on its agenda.

We established three main focuses for our presidency: the Middle East, children and armed conflict, and Africa. Allow me to broadly state what we have accomplished together. On the Middle East, the high-level debate (see S/PV.7419) presided by the Minister Laurent Fabius and devoted to the victims of attacks and abuses on ethnic or religious grounds in the Middle East was a key moment in mobilizing the international community. The powerful statements delivered by the participants and the statement of the Secretary-General allowed that first meeting on this topic to alert and mobilize the United Nations as a whole and above all to start planning a response. Minister Laurent Fabius and the Secretary-General also outlined the prospect of plan of action to be developed by a panel of experts. As Mr. Fabius stated, France is ready to host an international conference that would be devoted to the presentation of the findings of the panel of experts. We will ensure the follow-up to this initiative so that this important political dynamic is translated into tangible action on this critical topic to enable the return of threatened populations.

On Libya, the Council adopted three resolutions — resolutions 2208 (2015), 2213 (2015) and 2214 (2015) — this month focusing on the political and security aspects of the crisis and underscored the importance of United Nations mediation. Faced with the crisis in Yemen, the Council held an emergency meeting (see S/PV.7411) on Sunday, 22 March, and adopted presidential statement S/PRST/2015/8 renewing its support for the legitimate President and the efforts undertaken by the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on Yemen. Naturally, given the acceleration of events, the Council should remain mobilized to encourage and support any viable solution to the crisis. We also adopted resolution 2209 (2015) on the use of chemical weapons in Syria, which warns that any future non-compliance will be subject to measures under Chapter VII. We hope that the investigations of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons will be concluded as soon as possible.

Finally, let me turn to the peace process. The Council held a very enriching meeting (see S/PV.7417) with Special Coordinator Robert Serry, dwelling on his legacy on that dossier, which he had handled for seven years. Consensus remains within the Council that the two-State solution should more than ever remain the point of reference of our action. France sees that consensus as momentum for resuming discussions in the Council on a draft resolution to set the broad parametres of a solution, which are well known, while also relaunching negotiations in which the international community will spare no effort. As Minister Laurent Fabius announced, we intend to move make progress soon.

Finally, the Council adopted an important presidential statement on Lebanon, which covers all dimensions of the situation of the country and underscore the unified support within the Council for Lebanon.

Now I turn to the second focus of the our presidency: the protection of children in armed conflict, which has long been a high priority for France. In close collaboration with Malaysia, we prepared for the tenth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1612 (2005), by holding an open debate on child victims of non-State armed groups (see S/PV.7414). The debate heard speeches by the Secretary-General, the Special Representative of UNICEF, and the harrowing testimonies of Julie Bodin and, in particular, of Junior Nzita, former child soldier from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. He truly

taught us a life lesson by contributing an incomparably poignant human story to our discussion.

I also want to highlight that the French presidency sought to innovate in terms of Council working methods for this debate. Instead of voting on a previously negotiated text, then listening to speeches by participating States, we decided to reverse the order — first we listened, then we acted. We thank the more than 80 participants for their numerous and rich contributions. France will synthesize these soon, which I will duly issue to all Members of our Organization. It will be a useful contribution to the discussions and negotiations that Malaysia will host between now and the summer, following on from our efforts, for which I thank them.

I was impressed by the teamwork between our two delegations, which will continue, as well as with UNICEF, with which we have worked to promote, since their adoption in 2007, the Paris Commitments to protect children against their unlawful recruitment or use by armed forces or armed groups.

Finally, the third and final focus of our presidency was on the crises in Africa. First, I will refer to the important mission of the Council to Africa, starting in the Central African Republic, then to the African Union and Burundi, which I had the honour and pleasure to lead with my Angolan colleague, and for the Bujumbura stage, with my American colleague. I will not dwell on this because we have had the opportunity to report on it, but the negotiations of major significance this month focused on the Democratic Republic of Congo. The mandate that we adopted last Thursday in resolution 2211 (2015) establishes of a regular and structured dialogue with the Congolese Government on the future of the Mission. With appropriate staffing, the Mission will have to concentrate on a reduced number of tasks, primarily the protection of civilians.

The same day, the Council increased the force strength of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic at the request of the Secretary-General. I would also like to mention, and highlight, the vote on the first Council resolution (resolution 2206 (2015) setting up a sanctions regime in South Sudan, which was followed by the adoption of presidential statement S/PRST/2015/9 following the failure of the Addis Ababa talks.

Last but not least, it was under the French presidency that the Council held its first public meeting on Boko Haram (see S/PV.7421), and that negotiations began towards a vote on a draft resolution to support the efforts under way in the form of a joint multinational force comprising soldiers of countries of the region against this barbaric group.

Finally, I must add that our presidency allowed us to foster dialogue between the Council and regional organizations, in the spirit of Chapter VIII of our Charter. Indeed, we have received for the first time the High Representative of the European Union, Ms. Mogherini. We met in Addis Ababa with Peace and Security Council of the African Union. And I have received, in my capacity President of the Council, Mrs. Michaëlle Jean, Secretary General of the International Organization of the Francophonie.

I could also mention the important meetings we held on Ukraine, Haiti, relations between Sudan and South Sudan, Darfur, Afghanistan, the humanitarian dimensions of the situation in Syria and yet many other subjects.

I conclude by thanking all Council members for their cooperation thought this particularly dense and productive month. I would like to make special and extremely grateful mention for the Council Secretariat teams, the conference and security services, the sound engineers and our invaluable interpreters.

I wish Jordan every success in the month of April and I, for one, am confident that the Council will be in good hands with Dina and her team.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council. I give the floor to the other members of the Council.

Mr. Sarki (Nigeria): Steady hands and a cool head; these are two requirements of a captain navigating a ship in turbulent waters. During the past month, you, Sir, have exhibited in both characteristics of a competent, experienced and knowledgeable captain. You have steered the ship of the Council over the past month with steady hands and a very cool head. My delegation therefore wishes to thank you enormously for your efforts and your leadership. We also thank you for having organized today's wrap-up session, which provides us with an opportunity to assess the work of the Council in the month of March.

There can be no doubt that it has been a very busy month, during which the Council addressed a wide range of issues. Before going into those, I would like to commend your delegation, Sir, for inviting your Foreign Minister all the way from Paris, disengaging him from his very busy schedule, to attend the crucial meeting on the situation of minorities in the Middle East (see S/PV.7419). We also think other members whose ministers attended that meeting.

First, the briefing on cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations (see S/PV.7402) underscored the important role of the European Union as a key partner of the United Nations and various regional organizations in the maintenance of international peace and security. We see that partnership is exemplary and encourage both sides to continue to strengthen it.

The Security Council mission to Central African Republic, Ethiopia and Burundi was very significant. In Addis Ababa, the Council held its annual consultative meeting with the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council. The consultations covered a wide range of issues, including the enhancement of the collaboration between the African Union Peace and Security Council and the Security Council on conflict prevention in Africa. We are pleased that the AU Peace and Security Council and the Security Council partnership has facilitated effective exchange of information and analysis on conflict prevention. This has allowed for improved coordination and better understanding of their respective roles in managing peace processes. We commend you, Sir, for your joint leadership of the AU Peace and Security Council and the Security Council meeting at the AU headquarters.

The debates on Afghanistan and Haiti allowed the Council to assess the situation in those countries. Nigeria is pleased to note the progress they have made politically, economically and socially. It is important that efforts be made to consolidate the gains recorded to date in those two countries. We are aware that challenges remain, and that international support will be vital in meeting them. We therefore urge donors and development partners to continue to support those two countries.

During the past month, the Council adopted resolutions on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic and Libya. Resolution 2211 (2015), on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, extended the mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), including its Force Intervention Brigade, for an additional year, while resolution 2212 (2015) authorized an increase in military, police and corrections personnel for the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). Both resolutions demonstrated the Council's firm commitment to stabilizing the two countries. We have acknowledged the critical role of MONUSCO in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and of MINUSCA in the Central African Republic, and we pay tribute to the leadership and staff of both missions for the effort they are putting into the achievement of their mandates.

Resolution 2213 (2015) underlines the importance of the principle of national ownership in seeking a solution to the conflict in Libya. It rightly identifies a national unity Government and an agreement on interim security arrangements as necessary for the stabilization of the country. Resolution 2214 (2015) is an indication of the Security Council's determination to address the issue of terrorism in Libya, which has become more urgent with the expansion of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant to Libya. The presence and activities of terrorists in Libya represent a grave threat to international peace and security, particularly in the Sahel region, where Al-Qaida and other terrorist groups are already active. There is clearly an urgent need to address that situation in a holistic manner.

To conclude, we would like to conclude by thanking you, Mr. President, and your delegation for the astute manner in which you have presided over the Council this month. We extend our best wishes to the delegation of Jordan, the incoming presidency, and assure it of our support and cooperation during that country's presidency of the Council in the month of April.

Mr. Omaish (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to express my thanks and appreciation to you and your team, Sir, for your excellent stewardship of the work of the Council this month. There have been many developments in the international arena on issues related to the work of the Council. Our work culminated at the end of last week in the adoption of the two important resolutions 2213 (2015) and 2214 (2015) on the situation in Libya. In that regard, I commend your very effective and productive management of the affairs of the Council this month.

I also welcome the French initiative in organizing the open debate on the protection of minorities in the Middle East (see S/PV.7419). The meeting was an important opportunity to highlight the magnitude of the internal difficulties in the Middle East as a result of terrorism, which deliberately and systematically targets religious and ethnic minorities in Syria and Iraq with the aim of eliminating them. At the same time, I would like to stress that security, peace and stability will come to the Middle East only when efforts to confront terrorism and extremism are coupled with a serious and comprehensive attempt to address the root causes that underlie such acts. The main challenges facing the Middle East, in particular the Israeli-Arab conflict and the crisis in Syria, are at the heart of instability in the region and must be taken into account.

To conclude, Jordan looks forward to cooperating with Member States next month and hopes that our delegation will do as well as the March presidency.

Mr. Gaspar Martins (Angola): I would like to begin by congratulating you personally, Mr. President, and your delegation for your efficient guidance of the Council's work and for the productive month of March under your presidency.

One of the highlights of the monthly programme was the Security Council's mission to Africa — which I was very proud to lead with you, Sir — including the Central African Republic, Burundi and Addis Ababa for the ninth joint session aimed at enhancing the partnership between the African Union and the United Nations in matters relating to peace and security in Africa.

In the Central African Republic, we witnessed a very dire situation in absolute need of the assistance of the international community in order to overcome the tragic realities its population is facing. Our mission conveyed to the transitional authorities and other interlocutors the importance of moving ahead with the transitional process, in particular the implementation of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes and the effective rebuilding of State institutions. Based on the continuing instability and sectarian tensions in the country, the Security Council decided by resolution 2212 (2015) to authorize an effective increase in the military, police and correction personnel of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic.

The Security Council mission was able to observe the significant progress achieved in Burundi since the end of the civil war. However, it is obvious that peace remains fragile. Therefore, taking into account the fact that elections will soon be held, the main objective of the mission was to encourage the holding of a peaceful, inclusive, fair and transparent electoral process in accordance with the Arusha Accords, the Constitution and the road map for the election signed by the political parties. It is our hope that all political stakeholders will avoid aggressive rhetoric and that they will focus on constructive debate of the real problems facing their country.

The meeting with the African Union Peace and Security Council consisted of an exchange of views on the situations in the Great Lakes region, the Central African Republic, Mali and the Sahel, Libya, Somalia, South Sudan and Darfur, a strategy for fighting the terrorist group Boko Haram and, in more general terms, the strategic partnership between the United Nations and the African Union. The consultations on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the renewal of its mandate mobilized the attention of Security Council members and of the international community.

From the briefing provided by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (see S/PV.7410) and the discussions that followed, it is obvious that the Democratic Republic of the Congo is at a crossroads. Remarkable progress has been achieved in recent years; however, a lot remains to be done in crucial aspects of the peace consolidation process, in which the dialogue with the United Nations on enhancing the effectiveness of MONUSCO has a very crucial role to play.

Positive developments, of which the Security Council took good note, arose with respect to the situation in Liberia and the evolution concerning the Ebola virus. The apparent end of the epidemic enabled the return of the United Nations Mission in Liberia to Liberia and the pursuit of the peacebuilding and State-building process.

The issue of Boko Haram was also at the centre of the Security Council's concerns. The discussions on the draft resolution on the fight against the terrorists was the subject of a number of discussions at different levels. Finally, today the issue was discussed in consultations of the Security Council, and it is our hope that this marks the beginning of the consolidation

process leading to the stepping up of the international efforts in the fight against Boko Haram terrorists. The two open debates held in the course of the month (see S/PV.7414 and S/PV.7419) were the expression of the Security Council's great concern over the plight of civilians caught in the middle of conflicts, and reflect the importance attached to their protection. I thank you, Mr. President, for that useful way of dealing with the situation of civilians, especially children and women.

Children in armed conflicts have become a central issue in the Council's work and a new trend in the Middle East, where communities that have lived together in harmony for centuries have been shattered by this new brand of terrorists who aim at building so-called States based on intolerance and the elimination of any religious, ethnic or racial differences. We welcome the Secretary-General's announcement that the United Nations is developing an action plan on preventing violent extremism, to be launched in September, with a view to strengthening efforts to protect diversity in the Middle East, and of his intention to form an advisory group of religious, civil, cultural, academic and business leaders to offer insight on the sectarian dynamics.

The Middle East, with the escalation of conflicts there, has been the focus of the Council's deliberations. The inability of the Council to agree on the elements of a political solution in Syria is exacerbating the catastrophic humanitarian situation there, with unforeseeable consequences. Accordingly, countries with the influence over the parties at war should adopt a more pragmatic and realistic approach to the conflict if they are to make any meaningful contribution to the cessation of hostilities. Yemen, with the collapse of the United Nations-mediated talks, the rapid offensive of the Houthis, taking over the State and marching towards Aden, and the dramatic changes in the strategic situation have created a scenario of outright war and all-out foreign intervention, with unforeseen outcomes.

The United Nations Disengagement Observer Force, one of the last conventional United Nations peacekeeping missions and interposition force to maintain a truce between two symmetric forces, is in danger from the Syrian conflict, which adds disturbing elements to its mission. Equally, the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and Lebanon itself are suffering heavily from the consequences of the Syrian conflict.

The situation in Libya was also the object of consideration, without much progress in the normalization of political life and the mounting dangers of terrorism for the whole region. It is our expectation that the Security Council's adoption of pertinent resolutions might encourage the Libyan stakeholders to reach the necessary understanding in order to push the political process forward.

Regarding the situation in Palestine and Israel, it is increasingly evident that drastic changes must take place in its approach if the international community is to maintain the commitment to the two-State solution for Israel and Palestine. We fully support the initiative of France to hold an international conference in Paris over this serious issue, since the actions of Israel seem to be poised to undermine the two-State framework definitively, and we took note of the candid briefing on the Middle East (see S/PV.7417) by Mr. Robert Serry, urging the Council to present a framework for negotiations and show firm leadership on the matter.

Haiti remains at the centre of the concerns and the object of the continuous commitments to its process of peaceful State-building. Ukraine was for the first time the object of a Security Council resolution (resolution 2202 (2015)) endorsing the framework for a ceasefire and peace. Cooperation between the United Nations and the European Union was discussed in depth, as were the intermingled conflicts in the Sudan and South Sudan.

To conclude, we want to reiterate our willingness to work with our international partners on devising new strategies for dealing with the violent extremism that is affecting the very roots of civilization, innocent civilians, including women and children, and religious and ethnic minorities around the world. These strategies should include an energetic ideological response to terrorism at all levels and the use of all means available to isolate the terrorists and degrade their capacity to mobilize young people for their sinister objectives. The promotion of tolerance and the inclusion of youth in all aspects of policy-making are another particular important feature in preventing radical groups from exploiting the idealism of youth for their purposes.

I would like to conclude by extending our best wishes to our good friends from Jordan, and hope that next month we will continue with the productive work that was ushered in by France.

Mr. Olguín Cigarroa (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): We congratulate you, Mr. President, and your team

for your balanced and firm conduct of the work of the Security Council this month. We welcome the convening of this public wrap-up session, which we consider to be an indispensable tool of the Security Council that must be maintained. We also commend the initiative of your presidency, Sir, for suggesting the field visit to the Central African Republic and Burundi, which was a useful exercise to observe realities in the field, as well as to Addis Ababa to exchange ideas and opinions on the main issues of shared concern to the Council and the African Union.

With respect to Yemen, the developments of recent weeks have brought the worst-case scenario to reality. Obviously, the action of the Security Council has not been effective, since we have used the various tools available to this organ without achieving the desired effects. On the contrary, it would appear that the influence that can be exercised over the parties to the conflict has diminished rather than grown. We believe that the Council should work harder to better understand the situation, avoiding the repetition of solutions or ideas that may be counterproductive. The conflict must be ended now to benefit the civilian population of Yemen.

This month, the Council has held consultations on the situations in Darfur, South Sudan and between the Sudan and South Sudan. No progress has been made in reducing tensions in any of those crises, or in achieving an agreement that would address the root causes of those conflict situations. Furthermore, the security conditions and humanitarian situation appear to have deteriorated.

We thank the French presidency for conducting inclusive negotiations on renewing the mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). The adoption by consensus of resolution 2211 (2015) will, we hope, accelerate the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region and assist in achieving lasting peace in the country. We underscore the agreement reached during the negotiations on the resolution to request the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to inform the Council of MONUSCO's operations in monthly meetings at the expert level, pursuant to the proposal of the New Zealand delegation. We also appreciate the fact that, in accordance with Chile's request, it has been agreed to include troop-contributing countries in those meetings. We hope that those countries will be informed in a timely manner regarding the first meeting to be convened on Friday, 3 April.

The 25 March open debate on children and armed conflict (see S/PV.7414), focused on non-State armed groups that perpetrate the worst crimes against girls and boys, including kidnapping by terrorist groups, will no doubt contribute to lay the groundwork for the next debate, which we hope will take place under the Malaysian presidency in the context of the tenth anniversary of the adoption resolution 1612 (2005). During the open debate, cross-cutting support was expressed for dealing with child abduction in the near future, and for strengthening mechanisms to ensure children's right to education, in accordance with resolution 2143 (2014), including appropriate support to protect girls' educational facilities through, among others, the Lucens Guidelines. We welcome the participation of civil society in such debates. At the same time, we call for the depoliticization of the agenda so as to ensure that debates will focus first and foremost on safeguarding the higher interests of children, inter alia by promoting best practices and specific initiatives to that end, such as the aforementioned Guidelines.

Chile thanks France for convening an open debate on victims of attacks and abuses on ethnic or religious grounds in the Middle East (see S/PV.7419). We are especially pleased that many delegations responded in their statements to Chile's proposal that religious freedom be fully guaranteed and respected, as it is derived from people's fundamental right to hold or to not hold a religious belief and to not convert or be converted to another.

Finally, we appreciate the discussion on the draft resolution against Boko Haram and the consultations concerning the threat to international peace and security posed by that terrorist group. We take this opportunity to express our political support for the decision of the States members of the Lake Chad Basin Commission and the Republic of Benin to establish a multinational joint task force against Boko Haram, under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, as necessary. We believe that the affected countries of the region must find a consensus solution on the draft resolution, without losing sight of the need for coordinated action in the fight against Boko Haram.

Ms. Hill (New Zealand): We thank you, Mr. President, for convening this wrap-up session and for your

revealing overview of this record-breaking month. We thank you and your colleagues for managing the extraordinary workload with considerable flare and efficiency. I will focus on three points that have struck our delegation in carrying out its work.

First, New Zealand continues to support wrap-up sessions as tools with the potential to increase the Council's transparency to the broader United Nations membership, on whose behalf we act. We thank the presidency for scheduling this opportunity for the Council to live up to its obligation to meet the needs of the broader membership. Given the frenetic pace of the Council's work, wrap-up sessions can also provide an opportunity to reflect on cross-cutting items, but they are not the only opportunity for transparency provided by the presidency. The open debate on children and armed conflict (see S/PV.7414) was a great such example. It allowed all Members of the United Nations to contribute views as a basis for future action, and gave momentum to an important item on the Council's agenda.

Secondly, the Council's visiting mission to Burundi and the Central African Republic — its first — and to Addis Ababa to meet with our partners in the African Union Peace and Security Council was one of the highlights of the month. The three legs of the visit were important opportunities for engaging with people on the ground and getting a real-life perspective on the issues on our agenda today. Significantly, the visit fulfilled an important political function in visibly demonstrating that the Security Council is maintaining its engagement in those countries.

The visit to the Central African Republic was particularly timely, given the Council's scheduled renewal of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic next month, under Jordan's presidency. The visit to Addis Ababa and the broad subject matter discussed with our partners on the Peace and Security Council underscored the importance we attach to building that partnership. While such engagement is useful, it is no replacement for continuous engagement between the two Councils, which is something that New Zealand is committed to continuing to strengthen at the practical level. We extend our thanks to Angola, which, together with the Council presidency, led the visiting mission, and to the United States, which co-led the Burundi section.

Thirdly, allow me to again congratulate you, Sir, once again on the outstanding way in which you and your delegation have led the Council's work in March, under particularly demanding circumstances. We consider that it is the manner in which the closed consultations are chaired and your decisive and responsive approach to the consultations and to members' requests over the month that can truly make a positive improvement in the working methods. We also commend the your commitment to engaging with the media after consultations so to increase the transparency of the Council's work. Furthermore, we welcome the growing number of texts being initiated and developed by elected members of the Council and the functioning of the Council as a body made up of the 15.

We wish Jordan every success during its April presidency and stand ready to support it in every effort, as we continue our work across the Council's agenda.

Mrs. Adnin (Malaysia): I join other Council members in warmly congratulating you, Mr. President, on leading the Council through an extremely busy and challenging month and programme of work. We highly appreciate the steady and efficient manner in which you have guided the Council and its work.

Malaysia reaffirms its support for the wrap-up session, as it provides the Council with an opportunity to collectively reflect on its work over the past month. At the same time, it allows us to exchange views on the possibility of moving forward certain issues or agendas in the coming month.

I wish first to commend France for leading, and Angola and the United States for co-leading the Council's mission to Africa earlier this month. For my delegation, the mission provided valuable insights and first-hand experience of the situations and challenges faced on the ground in Burundi and the Central African Republic. The interaction during the ninth annual joint consultative meeting between the United Nations Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council was also fruitful and, we believe, paved the way for closer cooperation and coordination between the two bodies. In that regard, we welcome the joint communiqué issued following the conclusion, on 12 March, of the joint consultative meeting in Addis Ababa.

The statistics for March that you just detailed, Mr. President, reaffirm that the Council not only continues to be engaged but has also actively pronounced

and acted on the various issues on its agenda. It has taken a number of important and, in our view, meaningful decisions on a number of key issues related to the situations in Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Lebanon, Libya, South Sudan and Yemen, among others.

On the whole, and over the past month, we believe that the Council has remained united on a wide and diverse range of issues and situations. Such unity of both intent and purpose is important and must be maintained if the Council is to continue effectively and efficiently discharging its responsibilities mandated under the Charter of the United Nations. It is, however, unfortunate that on certain issues that are in equally if not more pressing need of the Council's effective and resolute response, such unity appears to remain elusive. In that connection, I would like to reaffirm Malaysia's commitment to continuing to work constructively to ensure that the Council acts concertedly and collectively on all issues and situations in its purview, including, in fact especially, on those that are more difficult.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to you, Mr. President, and to France for organizing last week's two thematic open debates on children and armed conflict (see S/PV.7414) and the situation of minorities (see S/PV.7419). Moving forward, we believe that the rich discussion engaged during both debates could better inform not only the Council but also all interested partners and stakeholders in framing possible next steps or courses of action. We also believe that holding such debates helps to focus the Council's discussion on, among other things, certain underlying themes, which include the threat posed by terrorism, violent extremism and the perpetrators of related heinous acts. On that note, we would like to recall the Council's most recent press statement on the terrorist attacks in Mogadishu this past weekend (SC/11844), which resulted in the death of one of our colleagues, Ambassador Yusuf Mohammed Ismail Bari-Bari, the Permanent Representative of Somalia to the United Nations in Geneva, along with other victims. We reiterate our strong condemnation of the attack and stress that the perpetrators must be held to account.

With regard to the issue of children and armed conflict, we appreciate the novel approach that France has introduced on how it might be further taken forward by the Council. We look forward to continuing the momentum and excellent cooperation and partnership on the issue with France and all Council members between now and June, and beyond.

In March we also received a final briefing from Mr. Robert Serry, the outgoing Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (see S/PV.7417). We greatly value Mr. Serry's efforts and contributions to the work of the Council and the United Nations system as a whole, and we would like to express our deep appreciation for his commitment and professionalism in that regard. Malaysia would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Nigeria on the successful holding of presidential elections this past weekend. We believe that a strong and united Nigeria is also in the interests of partners and stakeholders at the regional and international levels, including in the context of the ongoing efforts to combat the threat posed by Boko Haram in the region.

In conclusion, we would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Jordan on its incoming presidency of the Council for April. We reaffirm our commitment to working closely and constructively with Jordan and all Council members in the month of April, which promises to be as busy and challenging as March has been.

Mr. Baublys (Lithuania) (*spoke in French*): We would like to personally express our delegation's gratitude to you, Mr. President, and your team for your presidency of the Council this month.

(*spoke in English*)

There has hardly been a day under the French presidency without a public meeting of the Council, and barely a day has passed without a briefing from the presidency at the stakeout. The French delegation has been superb in managing numerous emergencies, including on Yemen, Boko Haram and Ukraine. We also thank the presidency for focusing the Council's attention on the issues of child recruitment and the dire future of minority communities in the greater Middle East.

Statistics do not lie. The Council's workload has grown by leaps and bounds. Lately, the programme of work barely leaves a window for the Security Council Sanctions Committees and working groups to do their work. With the establishment in March of a sanctions committee for South Sudan under resolution 2206 (2015), the United Nations is managing a record number of sanctions regimes. There are more informal meetings, more complex negotiations and more

products. More demands are placed on Secretariat bodies and interpreters. At some point, we will need to review some of the Council's working methods and the cycles in which items appear on its agenda, and to consider keeping open at least a minimum number of windows every month for the work of the subsidiary bodies that operationalize the Council's decisions. The ambit of the Council's work continues to expand. There are ever more conflicts on a growing geographical map: Ukraine, the Lake Chad region, Yemen, South Sudan, Libya, Syria and Iraq, to mention just a few.

Despite strong early warnings, United Nations mediation efforts, and political pressure from the international community, Yemen stands perilously close to a civil war. The relevant Council resolutions and the presidential statement adopted the Sunday before last (S/PRST/2015/7) emphasize the political unity of the international community. Yet the Council's decisions have not made a meaningful impact on the ground. The Houthis have advanced to Sana'a, to Taiz, to Lahej province and to the Al-Anad air base. The emerging sectarian strife and disintegration of this country will benefit only Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and their coterie. The gruesome attacks on two mosques on 20 March are a testament to that.

The Council has not been able to bring pressure to bear on actors in Yemen, largely because we were not doing enough. According to the Panel of Experts of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2140 (2014), former President Saleh amassed up to $60 billion, assets that have been used to undermine the legitimate Government. The Houthi military venture is no coincidence. Ali Abdullah Saleh was designated for sanctions, yet the Council has been slow to identify and freeze assets controlled through his family members and entourage. We have listened carefully to the Panel's call for new measures to be considered to restrict the flow of arms into Yemen. Over the past 50 years military actions have never proved a lasting solution in Yemen. Only negotiations with all stakeholders will lead to a sustainable solution.

When 29 students died in a Boko Haram attack on a school in Buni Yadi in February 2014, the Council received an early warning. The first Council reaction followed in April. A year later, Boko Haram remains a growing threat to peace and security in the region of Lake Chad and beyond. A week ago, 500 children went missing from Damasak in Nigeria. Kidnappings, killings, pillaging, sexual enslavement and pure terror perpetrated by Boko Haram have engulfed north-eastern Nigeria and its neighbours. We welcome the steps that have been taken to operationalize a multinational joint task force. Military operations against Boko Haram should be conducted in accordance with international humanitarian law and human-rights law. In the Council, Lithuania will support regional efforts.

Last Friday, the Council extended the arms embargo on Libya, among other measures, one more time. As Mr. Bernardino León, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, mediates between the parties to form a Government of national unity, the fundamental challenge remains. Libya is awash in weapons, thousands upon thousands of miles of borders remain mere markings on the maps, and terrorists, fighters and smugglers operate in that back country at will. Pouring more weapons into the region adds fuel to the fire. Resolution 2213 (2015), adopted recently, again calls upon Libya and international partners to address the illicit transfer of small arms and light weapons (SALW), manage stockpiles and destroy surplus or illegal weapons. More transfers, in particular of small arms and light weapons and ammunition, into Libya will end up with armed groups. Increasingly, small arms from Libya have seeped in substantial quantities into sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and even farther afield.

The failure to address systematically the implementation of the embargoes and small arms controls through disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and security sector reform in many of the conflicts has led to recurring cycles of costly violence. How many of the 26 arms embargoes imposed by the Security Council to date have achieved the objective of restoring peace and security? We think that the Council needs to seriously address the management of arms embargoes by strengthening their design, particularly in addressing the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and ammunition, and by providing more uniform support to States on its agenda. The Council lacks the structural ability to identify, formulate and follow up SALW embargoes in a systematic way across the sanctions committees, peacekeeping operations and relevant political missions. Lithuania looks forward to receiving the recommendations of the Secretary-General on how to address the implementation of the relevant resolution 2117 (2013) in the forthcoming report on small arms and light weapons. We look forward to

applying those recommendations, and we hope Council members will support that effort.

Finally, let me conclude by wishing the best success to the Jordanian presidency during the month of April. The delegation may count on our support.

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, allow me to congratulate you and your team, Mr. President, on the effective leadership with which your delegation has conducted the work of the Security Council throughout this month. You have done excellent work.

We appreciate the convening of these wrap-up sessions on the work carried out by this organ. We believe that the Council's work should be conducted in a broad and transparent way. In the spirit and purpose of Article 25 of the Charter of the United Nations, we encourage the strengthening of relations between the Council and the rest of the United Nations membership, recognizing that issues related to international peace and security concern all Member States.

It has certainly been a busy month. We would like to highlight some aspects of particular importance to my delegation.

In regard to Yemen, of particular importance and urgency was the Council's emergency meeting held on the situation in that country (see S/PV.7411). Yemen has plunged into violence as the result of ongoing political instability in the form of armed clashes between various factions. We are alarmed to observe that the deterioration of the conflict is being exploited by Al-Qaida and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), among others, to promote their criminal agenda, inspired by hatred and violence, with a view to promoting chaos and the fragmentation of the country. We call for the maintenance of the sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity of Yemen.

Venezuela reiterates its full support for the efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Jamal Benomar. At the same time, we believe that the solution to the crisis in Yemen must come from the Yemenis themselves and not be imposed from outside. No military solution is possible. It is necessary to insist on a peaceful political settlement of the conflict. We urge the parties and Member States to refrain from adopting measures that could undermine the achievement of peace and stability in Yemen, consistent with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

The meeting on 4 March on the situation in Libya (see S/PV.7398) gave us an opportunity to reflect on the gravity of the political, institutional and humanitarian crisis in that country. Its two parallel Governments, extremist armed groups and a growing terrorist network point to a country profoundly affected by sectarian violence. The Libyan people and other peoples of the Middle East are today victims of the breakdown of the State and its institutions, which are the result of unilateral actions that have triggered a severe process of political instability in the region. We are concerned by and warn against the increased illicit arms trafficking that has provided tremendous military capacity to the terrorist groups in that region today. We reiterate our strongest condemnation of the killing in Libya of 21 Coptic Christians from Egypt, as well as of other atrocities committed by terrorists in the region.

The meeting on 24 March (see S/PV.7412) on the topic of Iran gave us the opportunity to express our satisfaction with the progress achieved regarding the joint action plan and the talks under way in Switzerland between the P5+1 and Iran to peacefully resolve the issue of its nuclear programme. The process of negotiations under way is extremely important and should lead to the final lifting of the sanctions regime imposed by the Security Council on that brother country. Sustained cooperation between that nation and the International Atomic Energy Agency is a very positive aspect of the process. We also reaffirm the sovereign right of all developing countries, including the Islamic Republic of Iran, to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, pursuant to article IV of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. We hope that the non-proliferation talks will culminate successfully and that the countries involved will not yield to the blackmail of war and hatred.

Venezuela attaches particular importance to discussions on the Palestinian issue. The Security Council has an historic debt to the Palestinian people, dating back more than 50 years. We hope that the international community will express its position through this organ as soon as possible with a view to ensuring the right of the Palestinian people to fully exercise its right to self-determination, including its admission as a Member State of the United Nations.

The Security Council must retake the initiative and fully assume its Charter responsibility for international peace and security by adopting as soon as possible a decision demanding an end to the Israeli occupation of the territories of the State of Palestine, which has continued illegally for more than 40 years. Israel's occupation of those territories and settlement-building exercise are significant causes of gross violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. We support an end to impunity; those responsible for war crimes must be brought to justice. Finally, we express our hope for the renewal of negotiations between the parties within the framework of a solution involving two States, Israel and Palestine.

No less important is the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, where war and the activities of terrorist groups have fed an increasingly violent situation with severe humanitarian implications. Venezuela calls for a ceasefire and supports a political solution, with the active participation of the Syrian people without foreign intervention. We are concerned about the dismal human rights situation. It is a true tragedy that should be the focus of our attention in the future. We are in favour of a political solution to the conflict that includes all parties, respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria, and puts an end to the supply of arms and equipment and the training of terrorist organizations, such as ISIL and the Al-Nusra Front.

The Security Council's visit to Africa between 10 and 13 March was an excellent opportunity to support the efforts of the authorities of the Central African Republic and to better understand the situation in that country. It was also an opportunity to monitor and evaluate the work carried out by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic in fulfilling its mandate, including the protection of civilians.

We also welcome the holding of the annual consultation between the Peace and Security Council of the African Union and the United Nations Security Council, as well as the joint communiqué that was issued. We would like to make particular mention of the visit to Burundi in support of the process of presidential and legislative elections of May and June 2014.

Regarding Darfur, we regret that the situation on the ground has not improved, as we had hoped it would. We call on the parties to renew dialogue and request those countries that have maintained unilateral sanctions against the Sudanese Government to lift them, including debt relief to Sudan. We stated as much at the meeting held on 17 March (see S/PV.7405).

On the issue of open debates, we believe that the debate on children in armed conflict (see S/PV.7414) was of particular importance. The high number of participants in that debate clearly reflects the importance of the issue and the need to step up international cooperation efforts to ensure the protection of this vulnerable group, which is the target of the most terrible atrocities. It is important that a growing number of countries consider it essential to adopt a comprehensive approach to the issue through dealing with the deep-rooted causes of conflict, without disregarding short- or medium-term efforts. We firmly reject all practices such as the abduction of children, their enslavement and the violation of their human rights. Such offences should be considered crimes against humanity, and those responsible should be brought before international criminal justice.

We also demand the release of 300 Palestinian children who continue to be detained in Israeli jails. We express our support for Malaysia's efforts as Chair of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. We welcome the fact that the issue of children will be one of the most important issues during the month of June, when it will be presiding over the Security Council.

The open debate held on 27 March (see S/PV.7419) on the victims of attacks and abuses on religious and ethnic grounds in the Middle East, presided over by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of France, Mr. Laurent Fabius, was an opportunity to firmly reject all acts of intolerance, intimidation, aggression or violence committed against any religious or ethnic community by extremist organizations, particularly those committed by terrorist groups, which have proliferated in recent years in the Middle East.

How is it possible that a region that has been the cradle of civilization, a region where for thousands of years diverse ethnic and religious groups have coexisted peacefully, could have fallen prey to barbaric terrorism? It is imperative to increase efforts aimed at strengthening agreed measures to prevent and cut off external support to such groups, in particular their funding and their sources of modern weapons.

By the same token, we reiterate that it is essential to condemn, along with such atrocities, the dismantling

of the institutional capacity of States. We also stress the need to strengthen the bans on sources of funding and logistical and military equipment for such terrorist organizations.

Finally, we welcome the briefing today (see S/PV.7421) on the terrorist threat to international peace and security posed by Boko Haram in the countries of the Lake Chad Basin and in the rest of the region. We reiterate our condemnation of the criminal actions of that terrorist organization, which that has sown death and destruction in that area through the kidnapping and murder of children and women, who are the main victims of attacks.

Venezuela is ready to support a resolution of the Security Council that provides political support to the countries of the region that bear the main military burden in dealing with this threat. Such a resolution should be based on agreement among all the countries affected, in particular Nigeria.

Finally, we congratulate Nigeria for holding elections as a key factor for security and stability in the country. We are certain that during the month of April, the Security Council will maintain its dynamic pace of work and continue to debate vital issues under the presidency of Jordan, which can count on our full support.

Mr. Safronkov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The agenda of the Security Council for the month of March was a very busy one, and we would like to thank the French team for the very skilful manner in which it conducted the work of the Council and the trip to Africa.

I should like to touch on a number of key issues. We are grateful to the delegation of France for having convened a meeting on the issue of ethnic and religious minorities in the Middle East (see S/PV.7419). This situation has deteriorated significantly in recent years, but the preconditions for the emergence on the territory of a number of States of the region of organizations using Islam as a pretext for spreading terrorism, which has nothing to do with that peaceful religion, are not new. The spread of this malignant phenomenon is the result of the political vacuum that has emerged in a number of countries.

Russia has always been in favour of resolving crisis situations in the region through gradual reforms based on national dialogue, without external interference, on the basis of peace and harmony among all religious groups, including the various sects of Islam and Christianity.

Countering the increase of religious extremism will be successful only if a universal approach is taken, without any double standards. A clear example of the fact that there is no alternative to this kind of approach is the deteriorating situation in Libya. We are particularly concerned by the increase in terrorism there; the Islamic State is increasingly entrenched in that State. Clearly counter-terrorism actions should be taken in parallel with political measures. The two resolutions adopted on Libya this month — resolutions 2213 (2015) and 2214 (2015) — will contribute to dealing with these fundamental issues. We should not drag our feet on implementing them. That would be dangerous, especially given the legitimate concerns of Libya's neighbours.

We hope that the presidential statement on Lebanon put forward by France will make an important contribution to stabilizing the situation in the country.

The situation in Yemen has worsened significantly this month, and we express our serious concern at the situation there. We have always supported the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of that country. We deem it extremely important for all parties to the Yemeni conflict and their external allies to immediately end all forms of military activity. We are convinced that the deep-rooted sources of conflict there can be dealt with only on the basis of a broad national dialogue under the auspices of the United Nations.

Russia, in its contacts with all of the parties to the Yemeni conflict, will continue to step up its efforts, including within the United Nations, to find a rapid and peaceful solution to the armed conflict in Yemen. We need to get the parties back to the negotiating table.

Russia is also actively involved in resolving the Syrian conflict, including through the holding of intra-Syrian contacts in Moscow. It is no secret that the current problems facing the area are largely fuelled by the fact that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been unresolved for several decades. Today the two sides are entering a critical phase in which they need to reconfirm once and for all their strategic choice in favour of a two-State solution based on agreed international legality.

During the past month we focused in particular on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We believe that the re-establishment of cooperation between the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is in the interests of both sides. In that context, we stress that it is unacceptable to extend the robust mandate of the Force Intervention Brigade to the Mission as a whole. The task of ensuring law and order and eliminating armed groups on its territory lies solely with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The Council has also focused attention on the tragic situation in Ukraine. I would like to underscore that the 12 February package of measures confirmed by resolution 2202 (2015) remains the cornerstone of the resolution of the Ukrainian conflict, and must be fully and thoroughly implemented.

In conclusion, we wish every success to the delegation of Jordan, which will preside over the Council in April. I assure it of our full support.

Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi (Spain) (*spoke in French*): I believe that the message is very simple: bravo France.

(*spoke in Spanish*)

I congratulate France because its entire delegation has done splendid work. If this wrap-up session is intended to give us the opportunity to evaluate or criticize the work done during the month of March, I do not believe our assessment could be higher or the level of criticism any lower. That is simply because France has worked at all times to promote and strengthen all instruments of preventive diplomacy.

This month, the international community and the members of the Council have had to respond to the very diffuse threat of terrorism and non-State actors. There have been few instances when we have dedicated so much time to addressing the terrible threat of terrorism. That is why I wish to highlight the debates organized by France, in particular the wonderful debate on minorities in the Middle East (see S/PV.7419). As mentioned earlier by the representative of Chile, France has also used all the tools at the Council's disposal to be effective. I would like to highlight in particular the splendid mission organized to Africa, as well as the Arria Formula meetings, which are a fundamental instrument for learning first-hand about what is happening in the field and for giving non-members of the Security Council direct access to the work of the Council.

Also under France's skilful leadership, we made the most of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations. I am specifically referring to the intervention of the High Representative of the European Union, which was truly important for Spain as a member of the Union (see S/PV.7402), and to the visit to Africa, thanks to which the Security Council has been able to deepen its ties with the African Union. That is a critical aspect of our work.

With regard to Friday's meeting, presided by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of France (see S/PV.7419), it was particularly moving to hear the testimony of the member of the Iraqi Parliament, which made all of us aware of the gravity and tragedy of the situation faced by many people outside of this magnificent Chamber.

With regard to working methods, I have listened attentively to all statements, but particularly to that made by the representative of Lithuania, who provided an interesting self-assessment on the work of the Security Council. I think he put his finger on it when he said that we have to improve the degree of effectinvess of the Security Council in the field. In other words, we must increase the impact of Security Council decisions on the ground; we sometimes get the impression that the presidential statements or the press statements remain somewhat intangible, with no direct impact on the life of individuals.

Lastly, March has been a special month for Spain, because it was the first time our Minister for Foreign Affairs participated in an open debate (see S/PV.7419) and because we undertook the great responsibility of being a penholder. A penholder may seem like a somewhat remote figure to non-members of the Council, and it is difficult to ascertain just what the penholder's responsibility consists of. We have learned that penholders have a great responsibility. We enjoyed success with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, but that was due to the flexibility and goodwill of all members of the Security Council.

To sum up, I would simply like to praise the work that France has done over the past month. And, because hardly anyone has noted it, I would also like to highlight the splendid work done by the Secretariat, which tirelessly supports the work of the presidency and the Member States. I would also like to thank our interpreters for their tireless work every day.

Mr. Zhao Yong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): My delegation would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's meeting. China highly commends France, as President of the Council for the month of March, for guiding the Council's work to a successful conclusion.

The Council has had a busy schedule this month; it adopted nine resolutions, including resolution 2206 (2015) on the reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan, and issued eight presidential statements, including those on the situation in the Middle East (see S/PRST/2015/7 and S/PRST/2015/8). I would like to focus on three points pertaining to the work of the Council this month.

First, the situation in the Sudan and South Sudan has been a priority issue on the Council's agenda for the month of March. With regard to South Sudan, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) has made the decision to establish a new mechanism for consultations and to push for a new round of political negotiations between the parties to the conflict. We call on the international community to remain firm, resolute and patient and to continue to push for the effective ceasefire and cessation of violence between the parties to the conflict, who must work rapidly, through negotiations, towards consensus on such important issues as the structure of the transitional Government, and cooperate actively with the mediation efforts of IGAD and others. The international community should also attach importance to easing the humanitarian situation in South Sudan.

At the same time, maintaining the overall stability of the relationship between the Sudan and South Sudan is in the common interest of the Sudan, South Sudan, and the countries of the region. China urges the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan to comply with the relevant agreements and Security Council resolutions, avoid unilateral actions that may exacerbate conflict, and jointly maintain the overall stability of the region. We commend the African Union High-level Implementation Panel on the Sudan for its continued mediation efforts and good offices; we hope that it will pursue such efforts.

Secondly, with regard to the issue of Afghanistan, this month the Security Council adopted resolution 2210 (2015), extending the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). China commends the facilitator of that resolution, Spain, for its efforts in that regard. China notes that the Government of Afghanistan anticipates assuming greater responsibility in its national reconstruction and economic and social development. That is in conformity with the fundamental principle of Afghan leadership and ownership of the resolution of the issue. The international community should proactively adapt to that new normal, wherein the Afghan Government and people will play a leading role in their own economic and social development. China supports that active role that the United Nations continues to play in the Afghan issue, and UNAMA's efforts to resolve the issue. At the same time, China believes that the UNAMA mandate should be further improved and refined in light of the needs of the transition process taking place in Afghanistan, thereby ensuring that UNAMA can better support and coordinate with the Afghan Government in its efforts to achieve national reconciliation and rebuild the State.

Thirdly, with regard to cooperation between the Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council, this month the Security Council mission successfully visited Central African Republic and Burundi. The Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council held their ninth annual consultation at African Union headquarters in Ethiopia, and issued a joint communiqué. China commends France for its coordination in that regard. China encourages the Security Council to continue to play the role required of it, and to facilitate a smooth election in countries such as Central African Republic and Burundi within the year. China hopes that the Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council will further strengthen their cooperation in a joint effort to maintain peace and stability in Africa.

Lastly, I wish Jordan success in the presidency of the Security Council in the month of April.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): Several notable issues captured our attention in the Security Council this month. Africa was naturally a major focus, including the Council's first trip to the Central African Republic. In the Middle East, we continued to concentrate on Yemen, Libya and Syria. This month also marked one year since Russia used its military to forcibly seize and occupy Crimea. I would like to touch on these issues here this afternoon.

Much of our time this month was spent addressing security challenges in Africa. The Council trip to the Central African Republic, Addis Ababa and Burundi was instructive and useful. In the Central African Republic, the armed groups are still armed, and disarmament needs to be a priority. Massive displacement has not been addressed. Nearly 1 million people out of a total population of 4.5 million have been displaced. Of the 436 mosques in the country, 417 have been destroyed, and some international forces were recently closed or are drawing down. The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic is approaching its full strength, but we must be wary of losing capability just as stability emerges.

In Burundi, the Council witnessed a worrying situation. The country's leader is at a crossroads. Opposition parties, civil society and human rights activists have all warned of a potential for violence if the president seeks a third term. The Council delivered a unified message on the centrality of the Arusha Accords, and we reiterate the calls to respect the letter and spirit of the Agreements and for more inclusive political space.

South Sudan also remains central to our work. Some 2.5 million people are in urgent need of food assistance, and more than 2 million have been displaced. The United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS) is providing shelter to more than 100,000 internally displaced people seeking refuge from violence perpetrated by both the Government and armed groups that oppose it. To address this situation, we welcome the adoption of resolution 2206 (2015), which establishes a framework for targeted sanctions in the form of travel bans and asset freezes on individuals and entities that undermine the country's political stability or perpetrate human rights abuses. The United States has supported the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the region in their efforts to facilitate talks to reach a comprehensive and inclusive peace agreement and to establish a transitional Government. We hope that this resolution will enhance IGAD's leverage and improve its chances of success.

As has been noted, the situations in the Middle East and North Africa have caused us concern this month. It is essential that the next phase of Libya's transition, the formation of a national unity Government, take hold before the entire country is lost to violent extremists. Through United Nations-facilitated talks in Libya, particularly since the start of the year, the parties have made progress towards bridging the political divisions that have prevented the country from providing for its people and impeded efforts to counter terrorist and criminal groups. Libyan parties must fully invest in these talks, and we maintain our complete support for Special Representative León and his efforts. The United States will continue to engage with its Council colleagues in looking how the existing sanctions regime can best address concerns over the illicit flow of weapons into and out of the country.

On Syria, just a few days ago, we heard from Under-Secretary-General Valerie Amos (see S/PV.7418). Her briefing drove home the grave decline in humanitarian, economic and social conditions for Syrians inside of Syria and in neighbouring countries, as well as the Al-Assad regime's significant failure to the Council's resolutions. Humanitarian actors, including the United Nations and international non-governmental organizations, must be able to deliver all necessary humanitarian aid, not just food, to Syrians in need. We remain particularly concerned about the regime's consistent removal of medical and surgical supplies from United Nations convoys prior to reaching their intended destinations despite explicit authorization to deliver medical and surgical supplies through resolutions 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014).

This was, of course, also an especially challenging month with respect to Yemen. Houthi actions undermined the efforts to achieve a political resolution by continuing to take unilateral actions that are not conducive to achieving a political solution. The United States, alongside the broader international community, hopes that the insurgents will stop their unilateral actions and participate in the United Nations-led effort to try to resolve the differences of all the parties there. Just 10 days ago, we were all shocked and saddened by the attacks on mosques in Sana'a that killed scores of worshippers. In fact, it is heartbreaking that we cannot get through a month without confronting such tragic and despicable terrorist acts.

In addition to Yemen, we saw attacks this month in Tunisia, where gunmen killed 19 people and wounded more than 20 others, and the attack in March in Mali, where five civilians, including personnel from UNMISS, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali and the European Union, were killed in Bamako. The United States condemns this violence in the strongest possible terms.

March marked the one-year anniversary of Russia's forcible seizure and occupation of Crimea and staging of an illegal referendum. Over the past year, the human rights situation in Crimea has deteriorated. Members of Crimea's ethnic minorities, human rights activists and those who oppose the annexation have suffered systematic human rights abuses. Local residents have been detained, interrogated and disappeared. Non-governmental organizations and independent media have been driven out. We continue to call for an immediate end to the Russian occupation of Crimea, which comes against a backdrop of continuing Russian interference in eastern Ukraine. We continue to believe that compliance with the September Minsk agreements and the February implementation package provides a road map to peace in Ukraine.

Finally, we welcomed Friday's Council open debate on protecting ethnic and religious minorities in the Middle East, presided over by French Foreign Minister Fabius (see S/PV.7419). Promoting religious freedom is a priority for the United States and it remains a core value that influences United States diplomatic engagement worldwide. In recent days and months, the brutal persecution of religious minorities has shocked us all. Together, we condemn the targeting of civilians of any religious affiliation for any kind of violence and likewise condemn the destruction of religious sites and property. There must be accountability for the individuals responsible for these despicable acts.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the entire French delegation for its excellent and patient stewardship of the Council during the month of March. To our colleagues from Jordan, we assure them of our cooperation and support in the month to come.

Mr. Cherif (Chad) (*spoke in French*): I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you, Mr. President, on having brilliantly led the Council's work under your presidency. Your success, Sir, would not have been possible without your entire mission's great contribution throughout the month of March.

As many delegations have noted before me, Security Council meetings held in March covered practically all the crises that are unfolding in different parts of the world. I will address several of them.

Upon France's initiative, the Council undertook a visit to the Central African Republic, Ethiopia and Burundi from 9 to 13 March 2015. In the Central African Republic, our visit allowed us to immerse ourselves in the reality on the ground and to see the United Nations many contributions through the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic and other international forces, in particular Operation Sangaris and the Central African Republic's armed forces. Their presence allowed for substantial progress to be made, despite the difficulties encountered in fostering an inclusive political dialogue and in organizing democratic, transparent, credible and peaceful elections in the Central African Republic.

It is worth noting that, despite the beginning of the stabilization process in that country, in particular in Bangui, the situation in the Central African Republic remains precarious and the challenges are immense. They include, among others, the holding and success of the Bangui forum, which should lay the path to be followed for the country's future; the implementation of a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process for the cantonment of armed groups; the redeployment of State administration throughout the territory; the organization of constitutional referendums and inclusive legislative and presidential elections; and the establishment of a truly national army.

In this regard, we understand and share the concerns of the transitional authorities over the deplorable lack of financial resources needed to organize the elections. We call on the international community to provide consistent assistance to the Central African Republic for its transition so that it may undergo a dynamic process of stabilization and peace. We dare to hope that, through the visit to the Central African Republic, the Council was able not only to evaluate the progress achieved, but also and above all to understand the immense scope of the stabilization work that remains to be done.

With regard to the Council's visit to Addis Ababa, it is part of the annual joint consultative meetings between the Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council on peace and security issues on that continent. We welcome the cordial atmosphere and mutual understanding that characterized this meeting, which was recognized in the issuance of a joint statement. Nevertheless, the time taken to negotiate that joint statement demonstrates that the concerns of the African continent are not sufficiently understood by some Council members. There is therefore a need for an effort towards mutual understanding between the two Councils so that the joint meetings will contribute

to making progress on the points under consideration. From that point of view, we support the proposal made during the joint meeting by the delegation of New Zealand intending to limit the agenda of the joint meeting to two or three items in order to have enough time to discuss them and to set up a follow-up mechanism after the discussions through permanent contacts. We welcome the fact that the joint meeting considered, among other issues, the threat of the Boko Haram terrorist group.

As announced in Addis Ababa, Chad, on behalf of the three African Council members, presented a draft resolution on the deployment of a joint multinational force, which is under consideration and will soon be submitted for adoption. The African members of the Council, the African Union, the States members of the Lake Chad Basin Commission and Benin hope that it will be adopted in the days to come. We note that progress has already been made in considering the text, and we thank all delegations for their valuable contributions and constructive cooperation.

The Security Council's visit to Bujumbura was a major step forward. It made it possible to send a message of trust and calm to the actors in Burundi in view of the upcoming elections, which are schedule to take place in April, by insisting in particular on respect for their obligations under the Arusha Accords and the Constitution. We hope that the upcoming coming elections will be free, democratic and transparent and that they will take place in a peaceful atmosphere. We welcome the maturity of the strong forces in Burundian society and hope that they will make every effort to avoid a reversal of the peacebuilding process, which has made it possible to break away from war.

The Council's visit to Africa was a genuine opportunity for the various actors of the countries visited to express themselves without time limitations or other restraints. Such a visit of the Security Council to the field is a lot better than the reports presented in New York. It allows the Council to see the reality in all its dimensions and aspects. We congratulate the French presidency and the Angolan co-presidency on their leadership, patience, organization skills and coordination throughout the Security Council mission.

The debates on 25 March (see S/PV.7414) and 27 March (see S/PV.7419) focused on current important issues, as demonstrated by the very broad participation of Member States. Despite the laudable efforts of the international community to assist child victims, the problem of children associated with non-State armed groups is far from being resolved. The moving and poignant testimony of Mr. Junior Nzita of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, who was recruited by rebel forces against his will at age 12, reflected the difficulty of the situation facing child soldiers. In that regard, Chad is pleased to have been cited as an example for having succeeded, with the help of United Nations agencies, in removing child soldiers from its armed forces and ensuring their reintegration. Chad is ready to share its modest experience in that area with any country that so wishes in order to eradicate the scourge of child soldiers.

With respect to the issue of attacks and abuses committed against ethnic and religious minorities in the Middle East, we are pleased that France has drawn the attention of the international community to the fate of these minorities. We also welcome the convergence of perspectives that emerged from the public debate on this issue. We welcome the plan of action proposed by the Secretary-General to protect these minorities and the initiative of France to organize an international conference on this subject. In addition to the measures to be taken to protect the victimized minorities, we must underscore the urgent need to provide them with humanitarian assistance in accordance with their needs and help them return to their lands of origin.

In conclusion, we reiterate our congratulations to you, Mr. President, and your entire team on having conducted an exemplary presidency of the Security Council and for the excellent work accomplished this month. I cannot conclude without wishing the delegation of Jordan every success and assuring it of Chad's full support.

Mr. Wilson (United Kingdom): Let me begin by condemning the Al-Shabaab attack this weekend in Mogadishu. Our colleague, Ambassador Yusuf Bari-Bari, Somalia's Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva, was among those killed. Ambassador Yusuf will be remembered as someone who worked tirelessly at the Human Rights Council to improve the lives of others. I offer our heartfelt condolences to the people and Government of Somalia. These senseless attacks will not dent this Council's resolve to support the people of Somalia.

We thank you and your Mission, Sir, for the energy and leadership shown during this month's presidency.

We welcome the fact that this meeting is again being held in public. We covered a huge amount in March, and others during this debate have enumerated the numerous aspects on the agenda, so I would like to focus on our preventative work.

We welcome the concrete actions on children and armed conflict proposed in the open debate last week and we support the continued strengthening of our relationships with regional and subregional organizations, as seen in our visit to Addis Ababa and by the first visit to the United Nations by the new European Union High Representative. I want to focus in particular on the visit of the Security Council to the Central African Republic, Burundi and the African Union. It is good for the Council to travel, and making it happen takes a huge amount of work on the part of both the presidency and the Secretariat. I will touch on three areas in particular: first, the importance of effective and efficient peacekeeping; secondly, the significance of up-coming elections; and, thirdly, the value of strong and flexible models for regional cooperation.

First, with regard to peacekeeping, during our visit to the Central African Republic the potential of that country was clear for everybody to see: hardworking people and significant natural resources. The problem is how to ensure the security necessary for development to take hold. We welcome the role that the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) has played in delivering such security, in conjunction with Sangaris and the European Union-led force (EUFOR). The increase of the MINUSCA troop ceiling this month was another welcome step forward to meet the substantial protection-of-civilians challenge in the Central African Republic, in particular as EUFOR draws down. But as we look ahead to the peace operations review later this year, we must also think about how we can empower and incentivize host Governments to embed security so that missions can responsibly draw down when the time is right. As our debate on Haiti (see S/PV.7408) this month showed, clear planning for the transition away from peacekeeping is vital for security gains to become sustainable.

Part of that transition process brings me to my second point — holding free and fair elections. That is particularly relevant this year. In Africa alone, there will be 11 presidential and parliamentary elections in 2015. And as we saw on our visit, Burundi's election in June will be an important opportunity to showcase how far that country has progressed under Arusha in the past 20 years. There is much to celebrate in that progress, including the increased contribution made by Burundian peacekeepers. Over 1,200 are deployed, including in the Central African Republic. But we are concerned by plans for a presidential third term. That would risk undermining the stability that President Nkurunziza has done so much to bring about. I am pleased that so many members of the Council made that clear in our meeting with him.

Finally, on regional cooperation, let me turn to our consultations with the African Union in Addis Ababa. We welcome such regular consultations and we are keen to make future discussions as focused and interactive as possible. As the Permanent Representative of Chad has said, limiting the agenda to fewer items and concentrating on the urgent issues would provide greater value to our meetings. As we heard from the European Union High Representative, regional and subregional group, such as the European and African Unions, will play a vital role working with the United Nations in the future. We therefore support more focused contact to help us achieve that goal.

Let me close on a sombre note. This month marked the fourth anniversary of the start of the crisis in Syria. The continued suffering of those in Syria and the region is a direct consequence of Al-Assad's refusal to give all Syrian people a voice, his failure to preserve security and his unwillingness to cooperate with the region. We must be mindful of the lessons learnt from Syria, in particular that those who cling to power without thinking of their people undermine stability rather than strengthen it.

The President (*spoke in French*): The representative of the Russian Federation has requested to take the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Safronkov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I regret having to take the floor a second time, but I am forced to make a statement on behalf of the Russian Federation.

I was, on the one hand, disappointed by the comments made by my colleague, the representative of the United States of America; on the other hand, I am filled with hope. Why was I disappointed? I was disappointed because, in March, the people of the Crimea marked quite a different anniversary — the anniversary of their historic reunification with the Russian Federation, based on the outcome of an open

and fair referendum. The people of the Crimea support that choice unanimously. Now, why did the statement made by my colleague the representative of the United States give me hope? I feel hope because she confirmed the importance and significance of resolution 2202 (2015), which endorses the Minsk package of measures as a basis for a solution to the situation in Ukraine.

The President (*spoke in French*): As this is the last scheduled meeting of the Council for the month of March 2015, I would like to express the sincere appreciation of the delegation of France to the members of the Council, especially my colleagues the Permanent Representatives, their respective staff and to the Secretariat of the Council, for all the support they have provided.

It has been a busy month indeed, and one in which we rallied to consensus on several important issues within our purview. We could not have done it alone and without the hard work, support and positive contributions of every delegation and the representatives of the Secretariat. I would like to thank the conference service officers and our interpreters. They have done a great deal for us.

As we end our presidency, I know I speak on behalf of the Council in wishing the delegation of Jordan good luck in the month of April.

The meeting rose at 5 p.m.